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Message Text

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14
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 INRE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7291

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: TBIO EG
SUBJECT: DR. JONAS SALK INTEREST IN EGYPT

REF: STATE 246347

1. WE ARE NOT ENTIRELY SURE WHAT THE AMERICAN FRIENDS OF THE FAITH AND HOPE SOCIETY IS AND WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION DEPT MAY BE ABLE TO PROVIDE. WE ASSUME IT WAS SET UP AS AN ORGANIZATION TO SOLICIT TAX FREE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FAITH AND HOPE SOCIETY. IF THIS ASSUMPTION CORRECT, IT SEEMS NATURAL THAT ORGANIZATION WOULD WANT TO GET MOST PRESTIGIOUS NAMES ON ITS BOARD IN SUPPORT OF FUND SOLICITATIONS EFFORTS. WHILE WE UNDERSTAND DR. SALK IS A SOMEWHAT CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE IN SOME SCIENTIFIC CIRCLES, HIS MEMBERSHIP ON THE BOARD WOULD CERTAINLY LEND IT SOME ADDITIONAL PRESTIGE.

2. SO FAR AS SALK'S INTERST IN HELPING THE EGYPTIANS TO COMBAT THEIR POLIO PROBLEM IS CONCERNED, THIS SHOULD BE APPROACHED WITH CAUTION. NAMRU DIRECTOR, CAPTAIN MINER, ADVISES THAT THE POLIO PROBLEM IN EGYPT IS AN EXCEEDINGLY SENSITIVE ISSUE. A DEBATE IS CURRENTLY RAGING ON SUCH ISSUES AS: IS THERE A PROBLEM; IF SO,
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WHO IS AT FAULT ETC. ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE

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SENSITIVITY OF THE ISSUE IS THE ADMINISTRATIVE
TRIAL HELD EARLIER THIS YEAR OF FOUR VERY SENIOR
MOH OFFICIALS BECAUSE OF THEIR HANDLING OF THE
POLIO PROBLEM. THE PEOPLES ASSEMBLY IS STILL
INVESTIGATING THIS MATTER AND THE ISSUE IS
HIGHLY PARTISAN AND NOT YET SETTLED. IN THE
CIRCUMSTANCES, MINER BELIEVES USG SHOULD USE
GREAT CAUTION IN BECOMING OFFICIALLY INVOLVED
WITH POLIO IN EGYPT. DR. SALK SHOULD ALSO
WEIGH THIS IN MAKING HIS DECISION.

3. WE HAVE ALSO DISCUSSED THIS MATTER WITH
DR. COOPER AND SHOWN HIM THE REFERENCE TELEGRAM
AND MINER'S COMMENTS. WHILE NOT ACQUAINTED
WITH THE UNSETTLED POLITICAL PROBLEM INVOLVING
POLIO TREATMENT, HE BELIEVES -- AND WE SHARE
THIS VIEW -- THAT ANYTHING THAT DR. SALK MIGHT
WISH TO DO IN THE POLIO FIELD IN EGYPT MIGHT BEST
BE HANDLED THROUGH THE JWG ON MEDICAL COOPERATION
RATHER THAN INDEPENDENTLY. AT AMBASSADOR'S
SUGGESTION, DR. COOPER AGREED TO HAVE HIS OFFICE
GET IN TOUCH WITH DR. SALK FOLLOWING HIS RETURN
TO WASHINGTON TO INFORM SALK ABOUT THE JWG ON
MEDICAL COOPERATON WITH SUGGESTION THAT ANY
POLIO ASSISTANCE BE HANDLED THROUGH THAT GROUP.
AT THE VERY LEAST,THERE SHOULD BE COORDINATION.
IN THE MEANTIME, DR. COOPER WILL TRY TO TAKE
SOME SOUNDINGS ONPOLITICAL ASPECTS OF POLIO
ISSUE DR. MINER HAS EMPHATICALLY UNDESCORED.

4. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, AND SINCE DR. COOPER
WILL RETURN TO US IN NEXT DAY OR TWO, WE SUGGEST
THAT A REPLY TO DR. SALK BE DEFERRED UNTIL
COOPER RETURNS. THEREAFTER, COOPER'S OFFICE
MIGHT BE CONTACTED AND REQUESTED TO CONVEY A
REPLY DIRECTLY TO DR. SALK. PLEASE LET US
KNOW IF DEPT AGREES WITH THIS APPROACH.
EILTS

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